

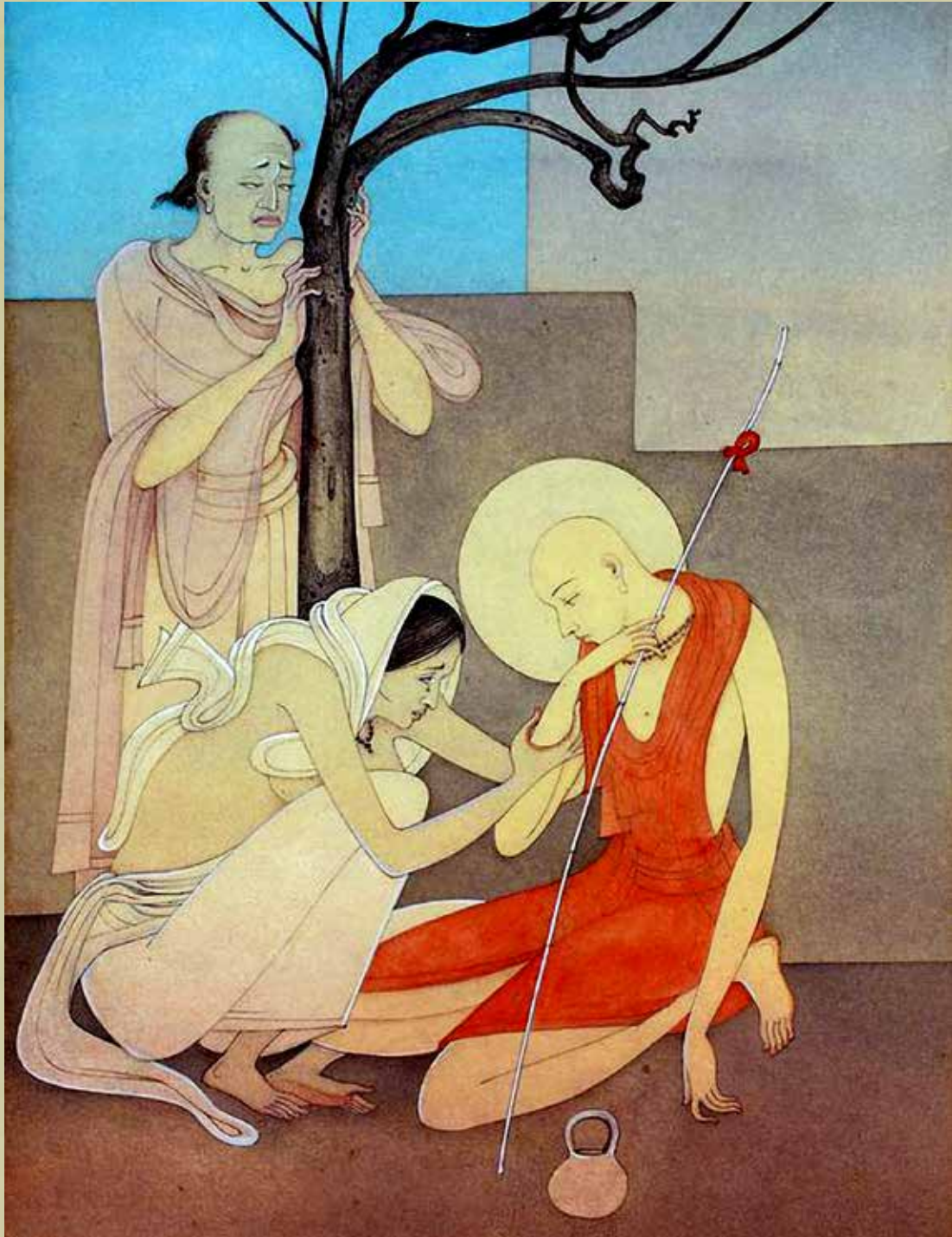
Sri Krishna Kathamrita



Bindu

Issue 581

Bhakti and Renunciation





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Unknown photographer

SANNYASA IN THE AGE OF KALI



His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

We pose certain commonly asked questions about sannyāsa in the following article, with answers from the teachings of Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

What is the proper etiquette of respect to be offered to a sannyāsī?

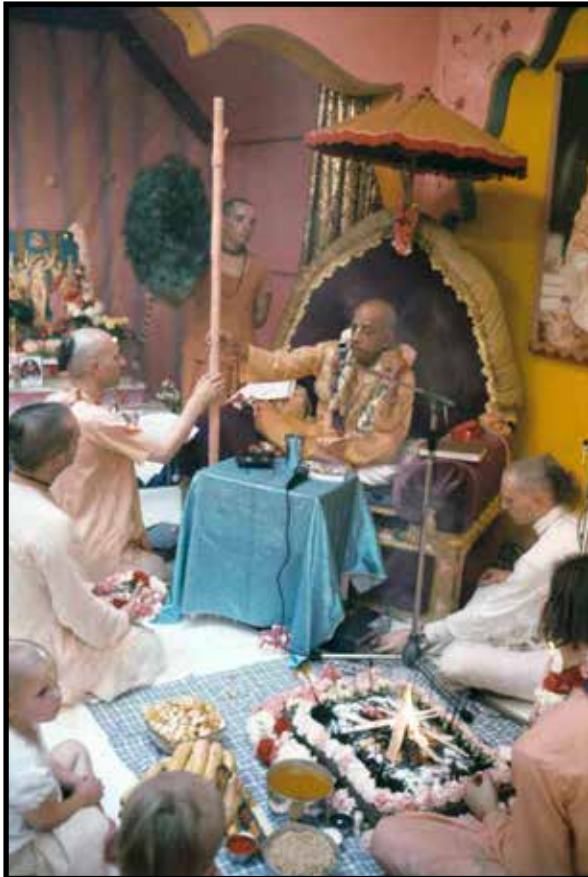
One who does not offer respect to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to his deity in the temple, or to a tridaṇḍī sannyāsī must undergo prāyaścitta [atonement]. If one does not offer obeisances to such a sannyāsī, the prescribed prāyaścitta is to fast for one day. (Purport to Cc. ādi 17.265)

Regarding your questions how to offer respects to sannyāsīs. Every sannyāsī, even if you see a Māyāvādī sannyāsī, offer him your respects —



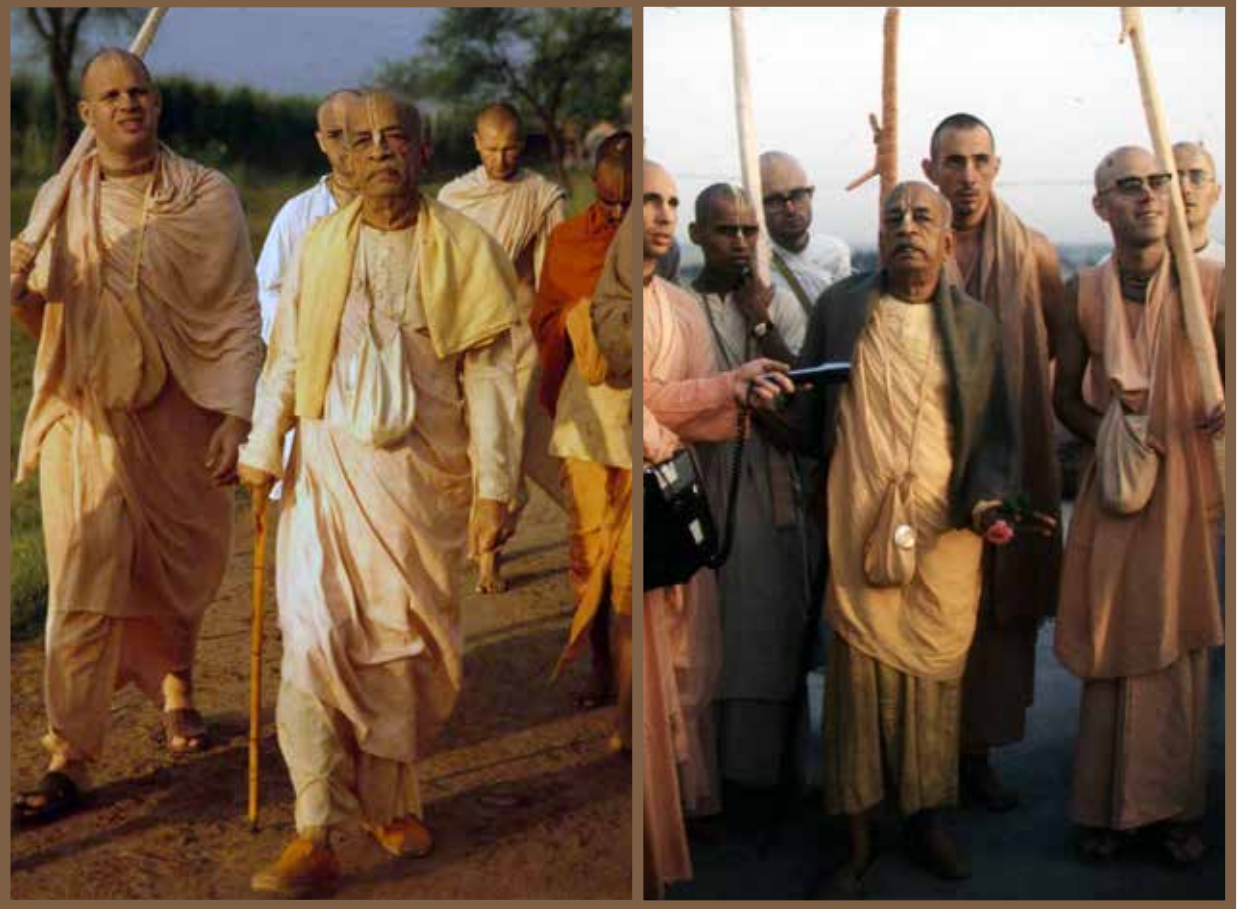
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Cover painting: Mother Sachi Cries Seeing her Son Nimai in Shantipur After he Takes Sannyāsa.
Painting by Kshitindranath Majumdar. West Bengal. Circa 1920s.



Unknown photographers

Srila Prabhupada and some of his sannyāsī disciples



Srila Prabhupada with some of his sannyāsī disciples in Mayapur

there will be no harm. As you have observed, we shall follow Lord Chaitanya's instruction that we give all due respects to others regarding their position, but there is no need of associating with each of them. Even if one is *vaiṣṇava*, but not of good character, we can give him the *vaiṣṇava* respect, but we cannot associate with him. (Letter to Jayapataka, 30 April 1970)

What is the definition of *sannyāsa*?

Sat nyāsa, sannyāsa. This is the combination. “*Sat*” means the Supreme, the ever-existing, and “*nyāsa*” means renunciation. That means one who has renounced everything for serving the Supreme, he is real *sannyāsa*. He may take this dress or not, that doesn't matter. Anyone who has sacrificed his life for service of the Supreme Lord, he's a *sannyāsī*. (Lecture in Los Angeles, 20 December 1968)

What is *Tridaṇḍī-sannyāsa*?

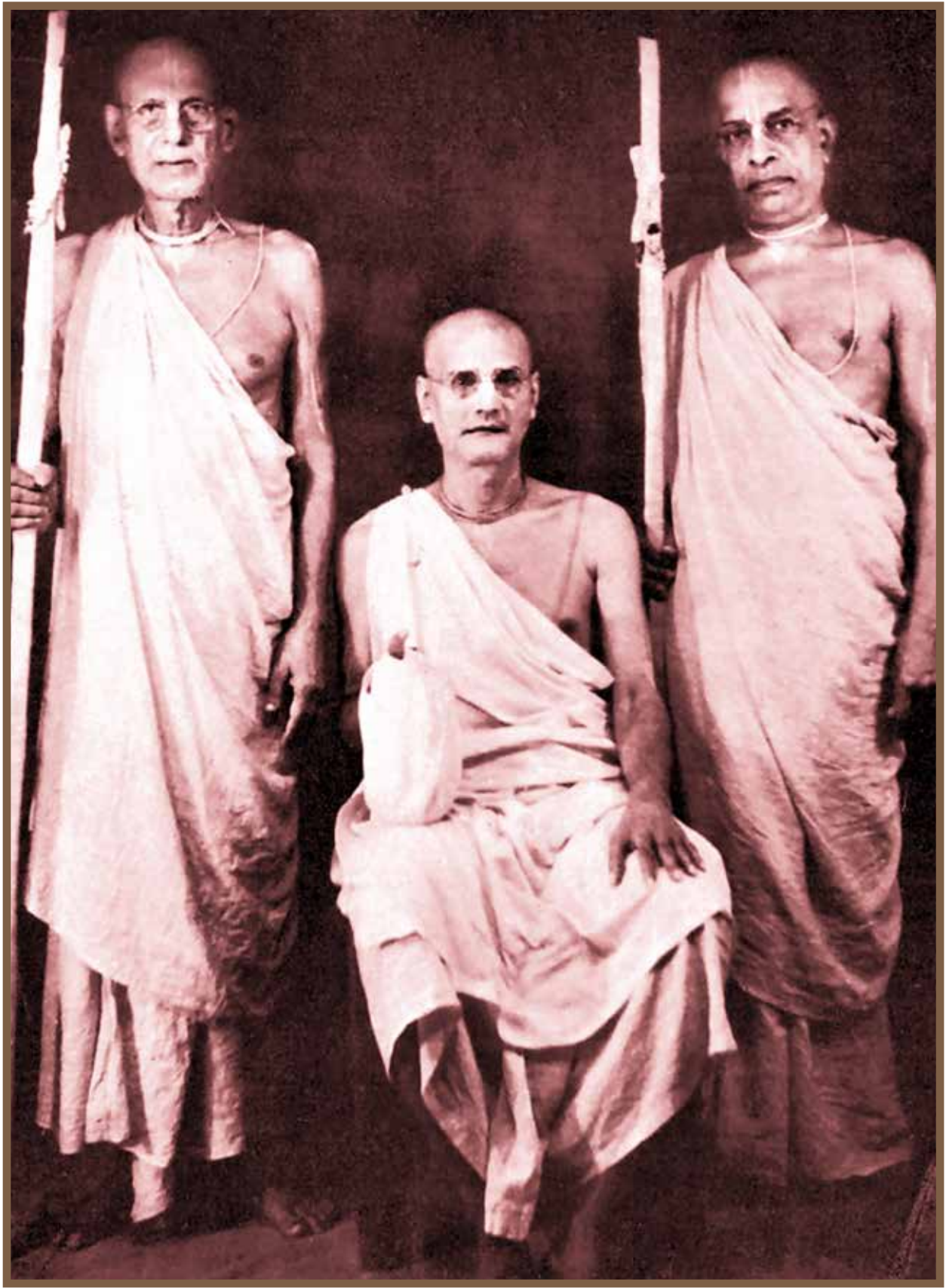
There are four *daṇḍas*. One *daṇḍa* symbolizes the self, and the other three *daṇḍas* symbolize

the body, mind, and words. ... So *tridaṇḍī-sannyāsī* means one who has devoted his life, meaning his body, his activities, and his words. Anyone who has devoted his mind, body and words for the service of the Lord, he is a *sannyāsī*. *Sannyāsī* does not mean simply changing the dress and thinking otherwise. No. It does not matter whether the dress is changed or not. If one is fully engaged with his body, mind and words, he is a *sannyāsī*. (Lecture in Hawaii, 20 January 1974)

What are the qualifications to take *sannyāsa*?

Who has no more material desires, he is fit for taking *sannyāsa*. *Sarvopādhi. Anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam. Śūnyam* means zero. All material desires made into zero. Then *sannyāsa. Sannyāsī, anāsakta*. (Lecture in Melbourne, 29 June 1974)

No more desire of material enjoyment — he is fit for *sannyāsa*. Anyone who sees: “Oh, this car is very nice, a beautiful woman is very nice,” he should not think of taking *sannyāsa*. (Morning walk conversation in Mayapur, 26 February 1976)



Unknown photographer

Photo from the morning of 17 September 1959 at the Keshavaji Gaudiya Math in Mathura. Left to right: Muni Maharaja, Srila Prabhupada's sannyāsa guru Srila Bhakti Prajnan Keshava Maharaja, and Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada on the occasion of Muni Maharaja and Srila Prabhupada's taking sannyāsa.



Srila Prabhupada with some of his sannyāsī disciples in Mayapur

Is taking *sannyāsa* required?

Not everyone can [take *sannyāsa*]. Especially in this age. Especially in your country, to take *sannyāsa* is a very difficult job. It should not be given; neither it should be taken. Actually, *sannyāsa* is forbidden in this age. But if one is very strong, he can accept *sannyāsa*. So better to remain a *grhastha* and cultivate Krishna consciousness. That is better. Don't accept whimsically *sannyāsa* and then do all nonsense. No. It is better to remain *grhastha*. But not *grhamedhī*. *Grhamedhī* means that he does not know anything else than to support the wife and children and live very comfortably, well-dressed, and... That is called *grhamedhī*. His center is only that apartment. He does not know anything more than that apartment. That is called *grhamedhī*. And *grhastha* means that he knows many things, Krishna, beyond this apartment. (Lecture in Paris, 9 June 1974)

Preach — that is *sannyāsa*. What is the use of changing dress? Do, actually. (Letter to Bhaktijana, 25 September, 1976)

One who has got a helpful wife at home does not require to accept *sannyāsa*. (Letter to Krishna Devi, 29 October 1967)

There is no need of taking *sannyāsa*. If you are sincere in preaching, you can do in this dress. Where is the harm? Simply by changing, taking a rod, you'll not become God immediately. You have to work, steadily. What is there in *sannyāsa*? Do you mean to say that by taking a rod one becomes a *sannyāsī*? *Sannyāsa* means you must be sacrificing everything for Krishna. That is *sannyāsa*. (Room Conversation in London, 15 August 1971)

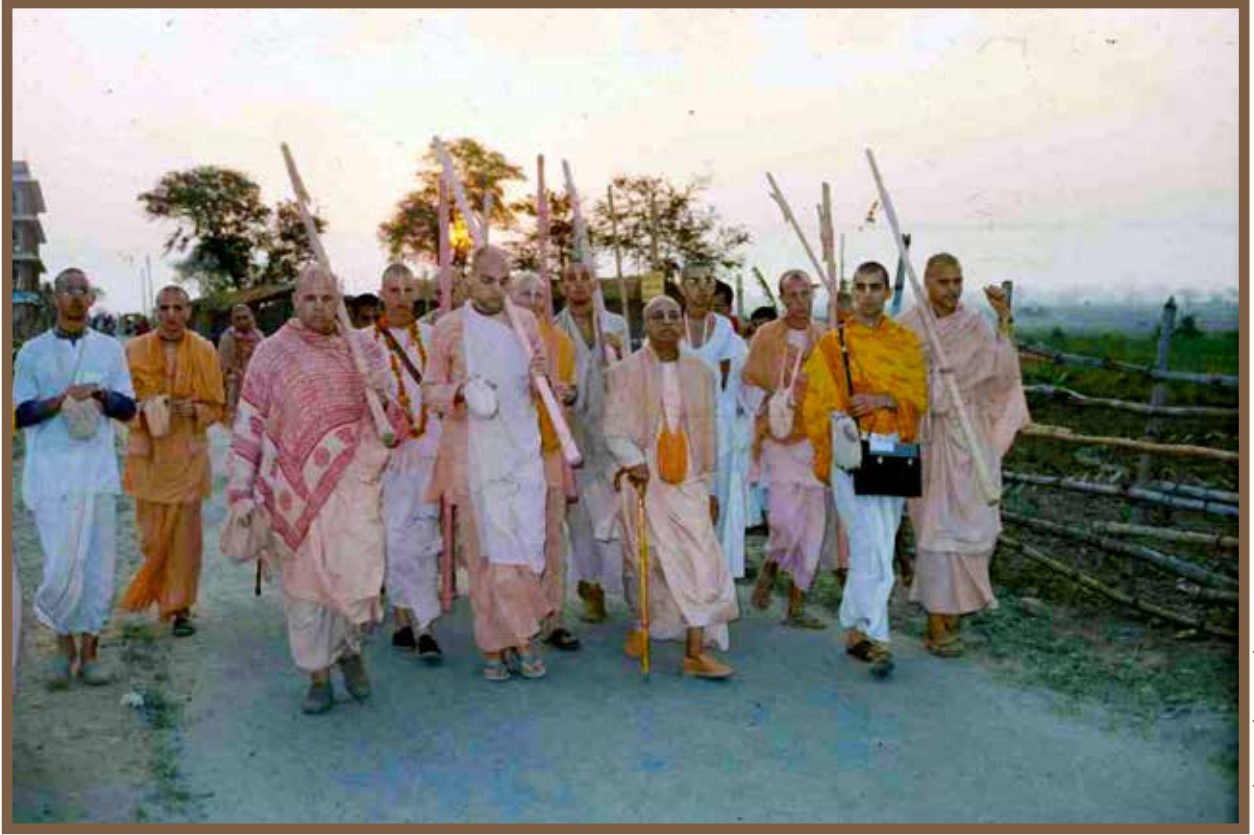
May one take *sannyāsa* before being qualified?

Don't cheat by accepting *sannyāsa* and indulging in these things. Don't be a cheater. That is very bad. *Sannyāsa* means to take a vow. In other stations of life there may be fall down, but *sannyāsa* means no fall down. Unless one is found completely competent to accept *sannyāsa*, there is no more use of awarding *sannyāsa*. (Lecture in Mayapur, 4 April 1975)

What is the duty of one who has left *sannyāsa* and married?

Especially in this age, Kali-yuga, it is advised that no one take *sannyāsa*.

*aśvamedhaṁ gavāmbhaṁ sannyāsaṁ pala-paṭṭikam
devareṇa sutotpattiṁ kalau pañca vivarjayet*



Unknown photographer

Srila Prabhupada with some of his sannyāsi disciples in Mayapur

[*Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, *kṛṣṇa-janma-khaṇḍa* 185.180 quoted in *Cc. ādi* 17.164]

From this, we can understand that in this age the *sannyāsa-āśrama* is forbidden because people are not strong. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu showed us an example in taking *sannyāsa* at the age of twenty-four years, but even Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya advised Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to be extremely careful because he had taken *sannyāsa* at an early age. For preaching, we give young boys *sannyāsa*, but actually it is being experienced that they are not fit for *sannyāsa*. There is no harm, however, if one thinks that he is unfit for *sannyāsa*; if he is very much agitated sexually, he should go to the *āśrama* where sex is allowed, namely the *grhastha-āśrama*. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 8.2.30)

You should not consider taking *sannyāsa* again, but in your country it is not a great thing. Although officially it is a fall down from *sannyāsa*, in your country no one understands *sannyāsa*. The more important principle is that we should purify our thoughts and engage them in Krishna's service. (Letter to Rupanuga, 8 June, 1974)

What is the purpose of giving *sannyāsa* in this age?

Of course, because Lord Chaitanya accepted this *sannyāsa*, so we are maintaining that system. The actual point of *sannyāsa* is not *mukti*, but is to satisfy Krishna. That is *sannyāsa* — how will Krishna be satisfied, how will Krishna's representative be satisfied. (Lecture in Bombay, 9 April 1971)

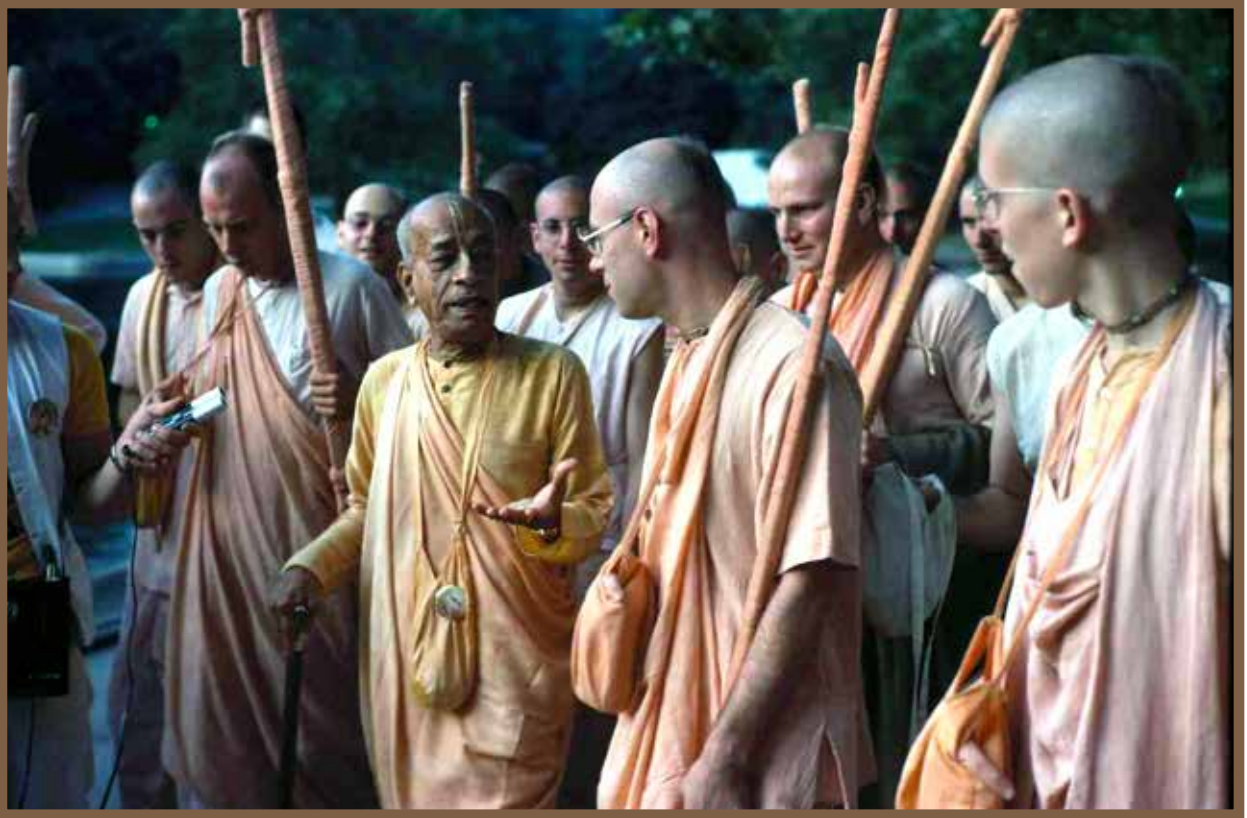
Following in his footsteps — we are preaching Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's cult and giving *sannyāsa* for preaching. That is not unauthorized. One who criticizes this action, he does not know the principle of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Lecture in Vrindavan, 16 October 1972)

Didn't Chaitanya Mahaprabhu reject *sannyāsa* in this age?

It is sometimes said that Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu disapproved of the acceptance of the *sannyāsa* order in this *Kali-yuga*, because in the *śāstra* it is said:

*aśvamedham gavāmbham sannyāsam pala-paitṛkam
devareṇa sutopattiṁ kalau pañca vivarjayet*

In this Age of Kali, five acts are forbidden: the offering of a horse in sacrifice, the offering of a cow



Srila Prabhupada walking with some of his sannyāsi disciples

in sacrifice, the acceptance of the order of *sannyāsa*, the offering of oblations of flesh to the forefathers, and a man's begetting children in his brother's wife.

Nevertheless, we see that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself accepted *sannyāsa* and approved of the *sannyāsa* of his elder brother, Visvarup. It is clearly said here:

*bhāla haila, — viśvarūpa sannyāsa karila
pitṛ-kula, mātṛ-kula, — dui uddhārila*

Therefore, should we think that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu made contradictory statements? No, actually he did not. It is recommended that one accept *sannyāsa* to dedicate his life for the service of the Lord. Everyone must take that kind of *sannyāsa*, for by accepting such *sannyāsa* one renders the best service to both his paternal and maternal families. But one should not accept the *sannyāsa* order of the *Māyāvāda* school, which has practically no meaning. We find many *Māyāvādī sannyāsīs* simply loitering in the street thinking themselves Brahman or Narayan, and spending all day and night begging so they can fill their hungry bellies. *Māyāvādī sannyāsīs* have become so degraded that there is a section of them who eat everything, just like hogs and dogs. This type of degraded *sannyāsa* is what is prohibited in this age. Actually, Srila Sankaracharya's

principles for the acceptance of *sannyāsa* were very strict, but later the *Māyāvādī* so-called *sannyāsīs* became degraded because of their false philosophy, which propounds that by accepting *sannyāsa* one becomes Narayan. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu rejected that kind of *sannyāsa*. (Purport to Cc. ādi 15.14)

Did Chaitanya Mahaprabhu take *sannyāsa* from a *Māyāvādī sannyāsī*?

Yes. That is a formality. It is not very important. Because *Māyāvādī sannyāsīs*, they are also Vedic *sannyāsīs*. They are not outsiders. Their interpretation of Veda is different, but they follow the Vedic rules. Acceptance of *sannyāsa* is following the Vedic rules. So you can accept *sannyāsa* even from *Māyāvādī*. It doesn't matter. But you have to transcend the limits of the Vedic rules. That is Krishna consciousness. Although Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took *sannyāsa*, he did not assume the *sannyāsa* title. His *sannyāsa* guru was Keshava Bharati. So naturally he should have accepted the Bharati title. "Sri Krishna Bharati", or something like that. However, he remained as Sri Krishna Chaitanya. Chaitanya is the name of a *brahmacārī* under the guidance of Bharati *sannyāsīs*. But even after his acceptance of *sannyāsa*, he did not assume



Unknown photographer

Srila Prabhupada with his *sannyāsa* danda

the title Bharati. That means that actually he did not take *sannyāsa*. That was simply a formality. *Māyāvādī sannyāsīs* think that they are God, But Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was preaching that we are servants of God. Therefore, he did not assume that title.

Besides that, when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was going to Jagannath Puri, his rod was taken away by Nityananda, who broke it and threw it away. At that time he apparently became very angry, “You have broken my *sannyāsa* rod. So I am not going with you.” And he separated from the party.

In one sense, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu did not require to accept any *sannyāsa* guru, but he accepted the formality that if one takes *sannyāsa*, one has to take *sannyāsa* from another *sannyāsī*. That is the system. Just like if you want to get married, you have to call for a priest. But it does not mean that you have

to agree with the priest’s personal opinion. (Lecture in Los Angeles, 27 November 1968)

Why did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta introduce saffron cloth and *sannyāsa*?

Actually, a *vaiṣṇava* is above *varṇāśrama-dharma*. But we don’t claim that we have become perfect *vaiṣṇavas*. We are not so impudent. We want to remain under the *vaiṣṇavas*. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* you’ll find that *vaiṣṇava* is *paramahansa*. A *vaiṣṇava* has no saffron cloth. A *vaiṣṇava* wears white cloth because *vaiṣṇava* is *paramahansa*. We don’t claim the position of *vaiṣṇava*. We want to remain the servants of the *vaiṣṇavas*. Therefore, this *sannyāsa* order is below the position of *vaiṣṇava*. The order of *sannyāsa* is a material classification, but *vaiṣṇava* is *paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām*, a *paramahansa* free from envy [Bhāg. 1.1.2], and, *sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*, above the material modes of nature [Bg. 14.26].

RENUNCIATION OF THE VRAJA GOPIS

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Krishna is *svayaṁ-bhāgavan*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but *gopī-tyāga*, the renunciation of the *gopīs*, is not based on this point. Their only focus is on Krishna, the son of Nanda Maharaja. He is Kanu of Vraja. He is *ujjvala-nīlamanī śyāma* — an effulgent blackish jewel. He is their most beloved. He is their life. He is the object of their love. With that *anurāga*, the *gopīs* have given up everything. No thought other than Krishna is in them. In the literature of the whole world, you will never find evidence of such renunciation. Theirs is the last limit of *tyāga* — for Krishna’s pleasure, happiness. It is incomparable in the three planetary systems. This is *gopī-prema*, the love of the *gopīs*.

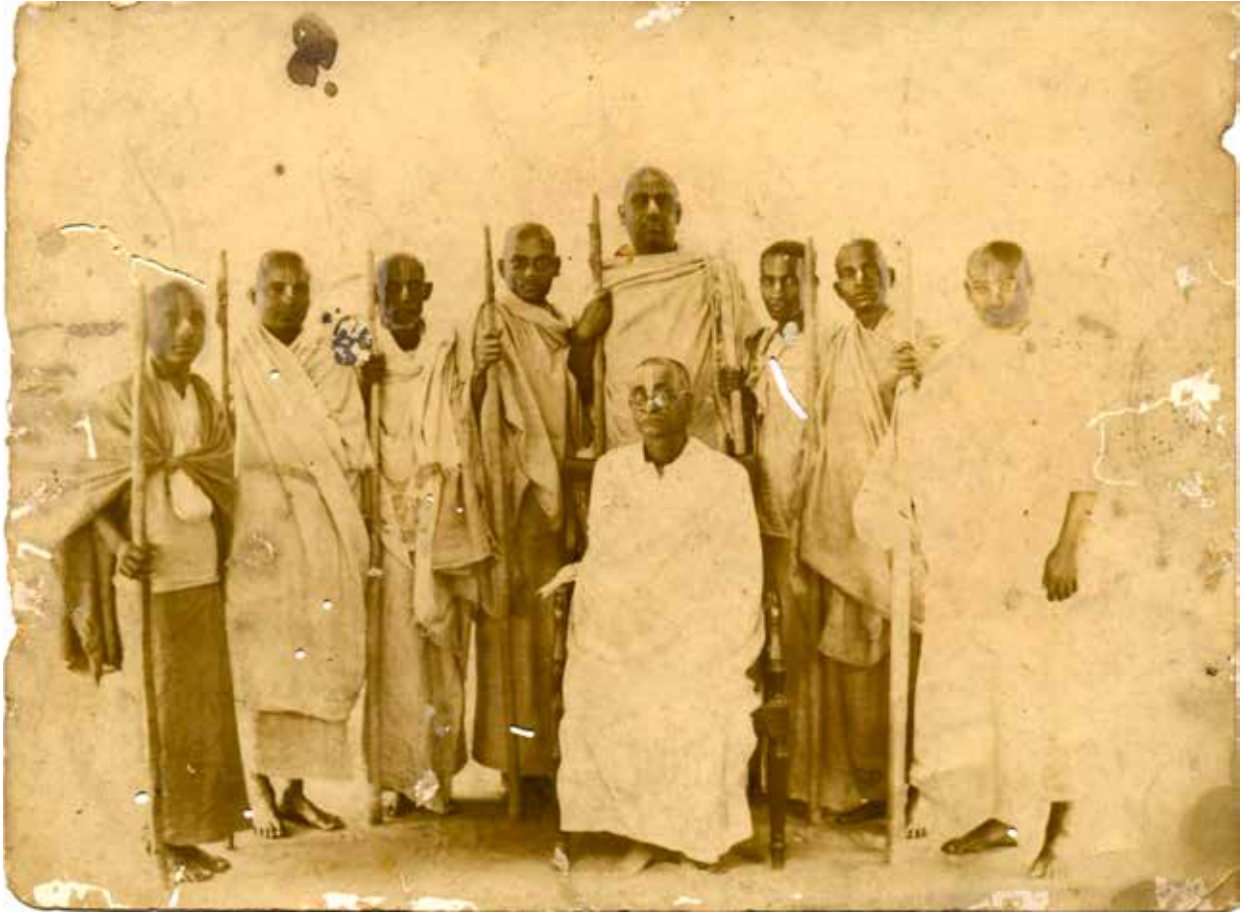
— From a lecture on 18 April 1994 in Bhubaneswar.





Unknown photographer

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada after taking sannyāsa



Unknown photographer

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada and some of his sannyāsi disciples

The position of being a *vaiṣṇava* is not an easy thing. It is above all material qualities. Therefore, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur introduced *sannyāsa* so as not to become imitators of Rupa, Sanatan, the Goswamis of Vrindavan — they are *paramahamsas*.

... The *paramahansa* stage should not be imitated. To stop this imitation, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur introduced this system, *sannyāsa*. He personally became a *sannyāsi*, and he gave *sannyāsa* to many of his disciples. (Lecture in Mayapur, 21 October 1974) 🍌

LIEUTENANT FOR A DAY



A remembrance of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Dhristadyumna Das recalls a conversation with Srila Prabhupada in New York City in 1976:

Prabhupada said, “Actually, I have not given any of you *sannyāsa*. But I am in a war with *Māyā*, the

SANNYASA IS FOR PREACHING

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Vaiṣiṣṭya-aṣṭaka 1.8

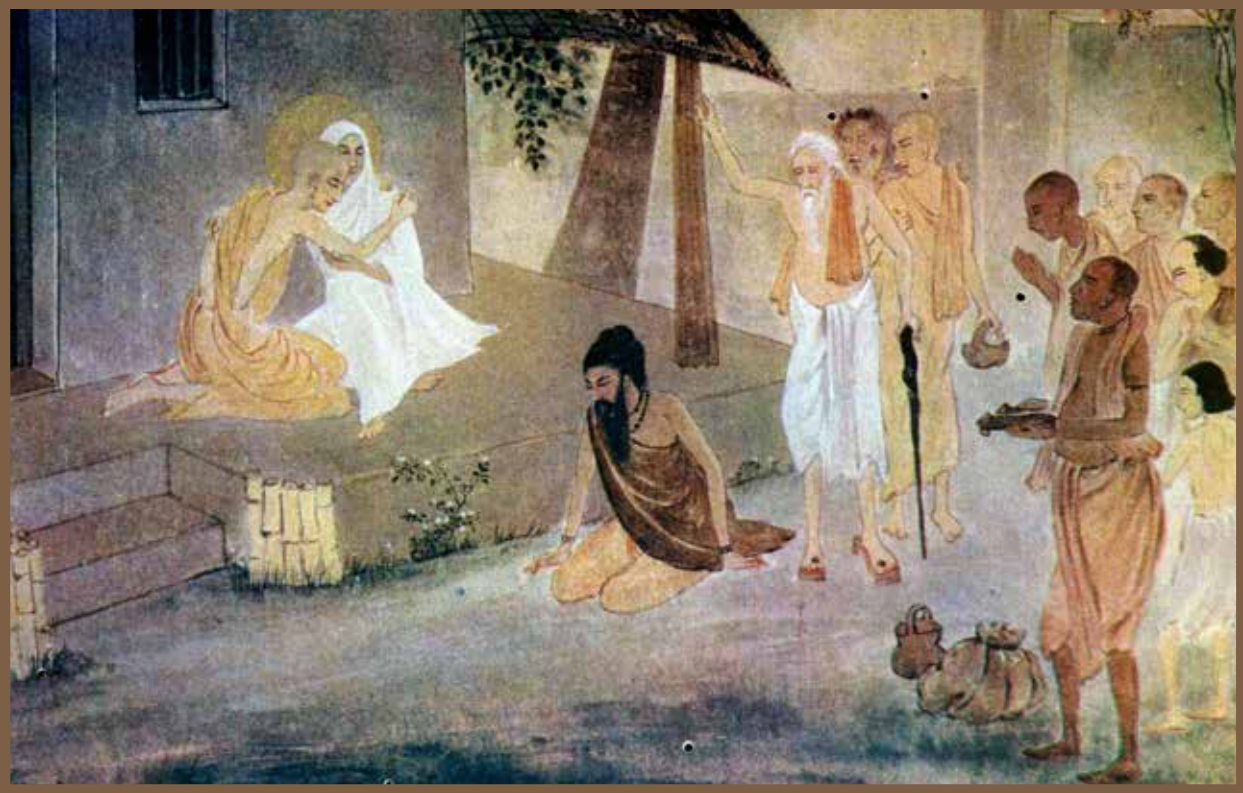
āra eka “śo-baṭ!” *pracāra* tare
prabhura *sannyāsa* yei *māyāvādī* hare

There is another type of “show-bottle” display, used solely for the purpose of preaching. That is Lord Chaitanya’s acceptance of the *sannyāsa āśrama* by which the *Māyāvādīs* are defeated.

— From *The Poetry of Srila Prabhupada*. Translated by Dasarath Suta Das. Nectar Books. Union City, Georgia, USA. 1998.



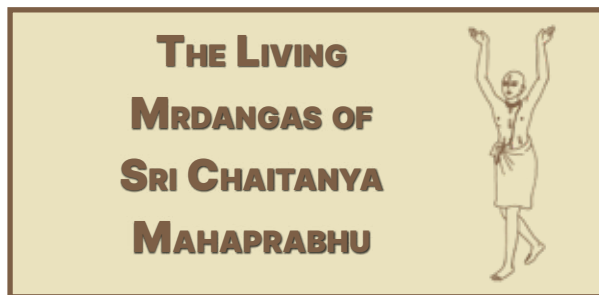
Vintage Bengali painting by an unknown artist



The anguish of Sachimata at the house of Adwaita Acharya shortly after Mahaprabhu took sannyāsa

material energy, and I need leaders.” He said, “It is called in wartime, ‘battlefield commission’. There are no qualified leaders, but someone has to lead the charge. So you take every fifth man, ‘You are now lieutenant of the squad.’ He is really a private, but we make him lieutenant for the day, and he leads the charge.” Then Prabhupada said, “It is to be understood that you are not sufficiently equipped for this fight and most of you will go down.” I know what he means now that I’m older. We knew very little [then], but we were enthusiastic. 🍌

— From, *Following Srila Prabhupada — Remembrances*. DVD 11. Courtesy of Yadubara Das. ISKCON Cinema.



Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

All persons of this world are superior to us in every way as far as this world is concerned. Such material matters are not commodities that are to be coveted

by us. We are merely beggars carrying the triple staff of renunciation and devoted to the chanting of the words of Sri Chaitanya. We have no more, nor any higher desirable object than the pleasure of serving śrī-hari-guru-vaiṣṇavas. We are not the operators of the instruments; we are only the instruments. We must always bear this in mind. The triple *bhikṣus*, *tridaṇḍi sannyāsīs*, are the living *mṛdaṅga* drums of Sri Chaitanya. We must constantly give forth our music at the lotus feet of Sri Guru. We should practice the function of the peripatetic preacher, *parivrājakācārya*, of carrying aloft the victorious banner of the commands of the divine Sri Gaurasundar by constant submission to Sri Guru and the *vaiṣṇavas*, fixing our eye on the polestar of the heard transcendental voice. We must always bear in mind that we have been initiated in the vow of a peripatetic [traveling] preacher for the sole purpose of promulgating the heart’s desire of Sri Guru and Gauranga. If we are constantly inspired with the duty of discoursing about the truth under the guidance of Sri Guru, then no hankering after traveling, nor any veiled form of desire other than the chanting of *hari-nāma* will ever strike any terror in our hearts. 🍌

— Lecture given in Madras, 18 March 1933. From *Shri Chaitanya’s Teachings*, pages 383-384. Sree Gaudiya Math. Madras. 1989.

SANNYASA IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS DEVOTION



**Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's
Kalyana Kalpataru 1.13**

*mana, tumi sannyāsī sājite kena cāo?
bahirer sāja yata, antarete phānki tata,
dambha pāji' śarira nācāo*

My dear mind, why do you want to disguise yourself as a *sannyāsī*? As much as you decorate yourself externally with this garb, to that same degree you deceive yourself internally with this hoax. Worshiping your own false pride, you simply make a show of your material body by artificially accepting the dress of the renounced order.

*āmāra vacana dhara, antara visuddha kara,
kṣṇāmṛta sadā kara pāna
jīvana sahaje yāya, bhakti-vādhā nāhi pāya,
tadupāya karaho sandhāna*

Now please try to understand my advice on how to become a true *sannyāsī*. Just make your heart completely pure, and constantly drink the nectar of Krishna consciousness. Search for that lifestyle in which your spiritual life can be executed easily and automatically, free from any distracting obstacles to pure devotion.

*anāyāse yāhā pāo, tāhe tuṣṭa haye yāo,
āḍambare nā kara prayās
pūrṇa-vastra yadi nāi, kaupīna para he bhāi,
śīta-vastra kanthā bahirvasa*

Just be satisfied with whatever you get easily, and never endeavor for any type of artificial pomp and grandeur. Even if you do not have proper clothes to wear, just wear a loin-cloth, dear brother! And in cold weather you can simply wear an old torn quilt.

*aguru candana na-i, mṛttikā-tilaka bhāi,
hārer badale dhara mālā
ei-rūpe āśā-pāśa, sukhādira kubilāsa,
kharbi chāḍa saṁsārera jvālā*

There is no need for fancy sandalwood pulp scented with perfume, my dear brother; you can use some ordinary earth or clay to mark your forehead with *tilaka*. Your fancy necklaces can be exchanged for a nice *tulasī-mālā*. Living like this in such a simple state of mind, all your nonsense external arrangements for so-called happiness will diminish, and you will thus be able to escape from the burning fever of materialistic existence.

PROHIBITIONS FOR A SANNYASI

**Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.13.8 and purport by
His Divine Grace**

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

*na śiṣyān anubadhnīta granthān naivābhyased bahūn
na vyākhyām upayujñita nārambhān ārabhet kvacit*

A *sannyāsī* must not present allurements of material benefits to gather many disciples, nor should he unnecessarily read many books or give discourses as a means of livelihood. He must never attempt to increase material opulences unnecessarily.

Purport excerpt: A *sannyāsī* is prohibited from making disciples through such material allurements. *Sannyāsīs* sometimes indulge in material opulence by unnecessarily constructing many temples and monasteries, but actually such endeavors should be avoided. Temples and monasteries should be constructed for the preaching of spiritual consciousness or Krishna consciousness, not to provide free hotels for persons who are useful for neither material nor spiritual purposes. Temples and monasteries should be strictly off limits to worthless clubs of crazy men. In the Krishna consciousness movement we welcome everyone who agrees at least to follow the movement's regulative principles—no illicit sex, no intoxication, no meat-eating and no gambling. In the temples and monasteries, gatherings of unnecessary, rejected, lazy fellows should be strictly disallowed. The temples and monasteries should be used exclusively by devotees who are serious about spiritual advancement in Krishna consciousness. Srila Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur explains the word *ārambhān* as meaning *maṭhādi-vyāpārān*, which means “attempts to construct temples and monasteries.” The first business of the *sannyāsī* is to preach Krishna consciousness, but if, by the grace of Krishna, facilities are available, then he may construct temples and monasteries to give shelter to the serious students of Krishna consciousness. Otherwise, temples and monasteries are not needed.





Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taking sannyāsa in Katwa from Keshava Bharati

sannyāsa-vairāgya-vidhi seha āśramer nidhi,
tāhe kabhu nā kara' ādara
se-saba ādare bhāi, sāmsāre nistāra nāi,
dambhiker liṅga nirantara

In reality it is complete renunciation that is the wealth of the *sannyāsa-āśrama*. By following this rule, one would certainly never look forward to receiving respect from others. Beware, dear brother! Deliverance from this material world is not possible for one who wants to get such respect by taking *sannyāsa*. Instead, he gets ensnared in mundane existence due to constantly maintaining the conceited pride of subtle profit, adoration and distinction.

tumi to' caitanya-dāsa, hari-bhakti taba āśa,
āśramer liṅge kibā phala?
pratiṣṭhā karaha dura, vāsa tava śāntipura,
sādhu-kṛpā tomāra sambal

You are actually an eternal servant of Lord Chaitanya, and your real interest as such is devotion to Sri Hari. What other wonderful thing could you get from the external form of the *sannyāsa-āśrama*?

Casting all false prestige to a far distant place, make your residence in the transcendently peaceful realm, far beyond the *varnāśrama-dharma* system, and live on the mercy of the *rūpanuga-vaiṣṇavas* as your only life-giving substance.

vaiṣṇavera paricaya, āvaśyaka nāhi haya,
āḍambare kabhu nāhi yāo
vinodera nivedana, rādhā-kṛṣṇa-guṇa-gaṇa,
phukāri' phukāri' sadā gāo

It is not necessary to introduce oneself as a *vaiṣṇava*, and one should never try to thereby make a show of external pomp and grandeur. Bhaktivinode's humble submission to you is that you should constantly sing songs about the glorious qualities of Radha and Krishna at the top of your lungs. 🍌

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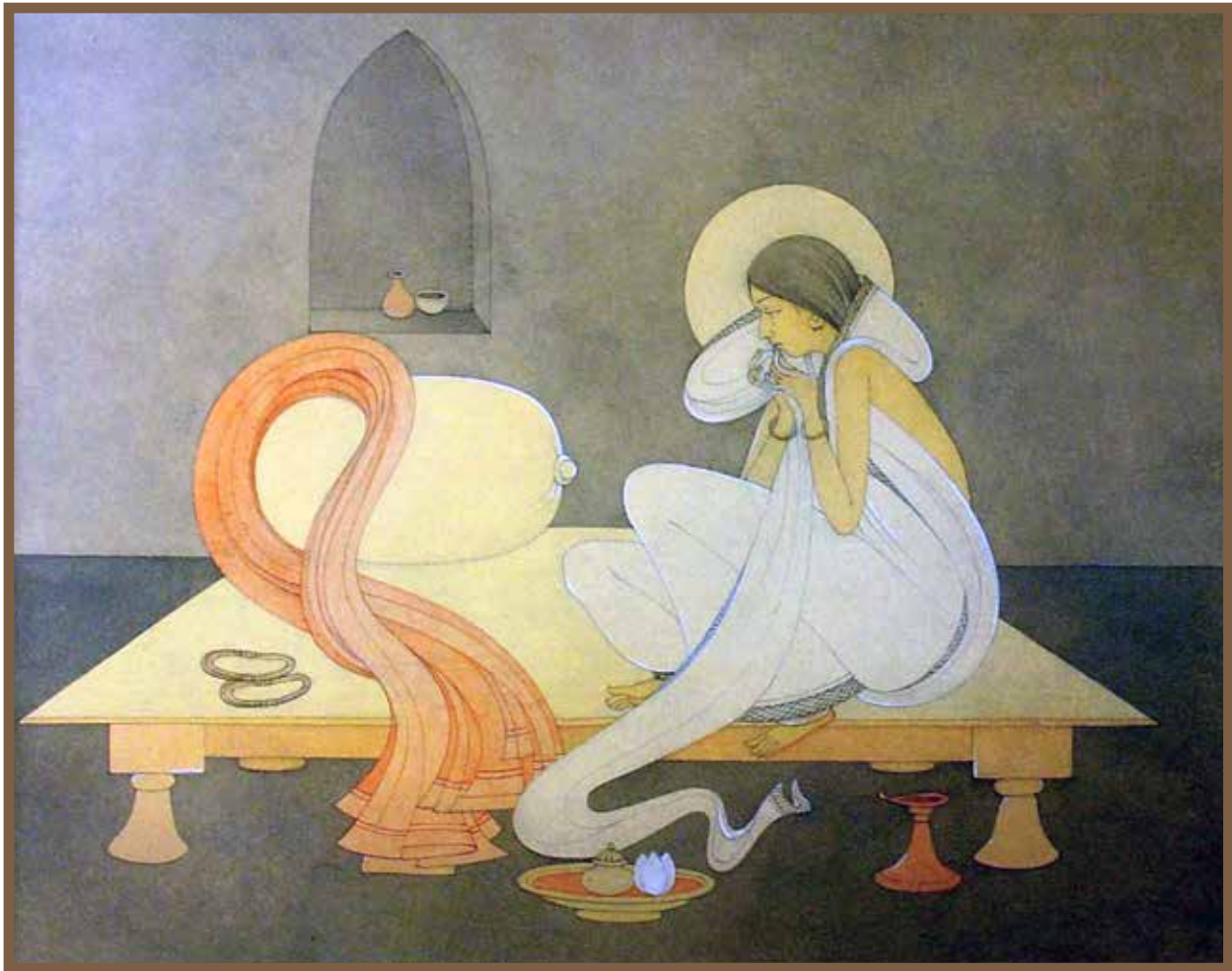
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Unknown artist. Painting from Haridas Thakur Samadhi in Jagannath Puri.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the mirror of emotions of Srimati Radharani

Painting by the Bengali artist Kshitindranath Majumdar. Circa 1915



Viṣṇupriyā-vilāpa — the lament of Vishnupriya after Mahaprabhu left home and took sannyāsa

KARMA SANNYASA



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Devotee 1: Sometimes devotees have taken *sannyāsa* in our movement because they have been frustrated in family life. Family life is troublesome. They don't want that trouble anymore, so they reject it and take *sannyāsa*.

Gour Govinda Swami: There is no such *sannyāsa* in our line. That is *karma-sannyāsa*, *jñāna-sannyāsa*, and it is in the *māyāvādī* line.

Devotee 1: But devotees in ISKCON have taken *sannyāsa* for that reason.

Gour Govinda Swami: In our *vaiṣṇava* line, no such *sannyāsa* is there. There is only one *sannyāsa*, complete surrender unto the lotus feet of Krishna.

Therefore, you take up this *tri-daṇḍa* — *kāya-daṇḍa*, *vāk-daṇḍa*, *mano-daṇḍa* — three staffs, indicating surrender of the body, the words, and the mind.

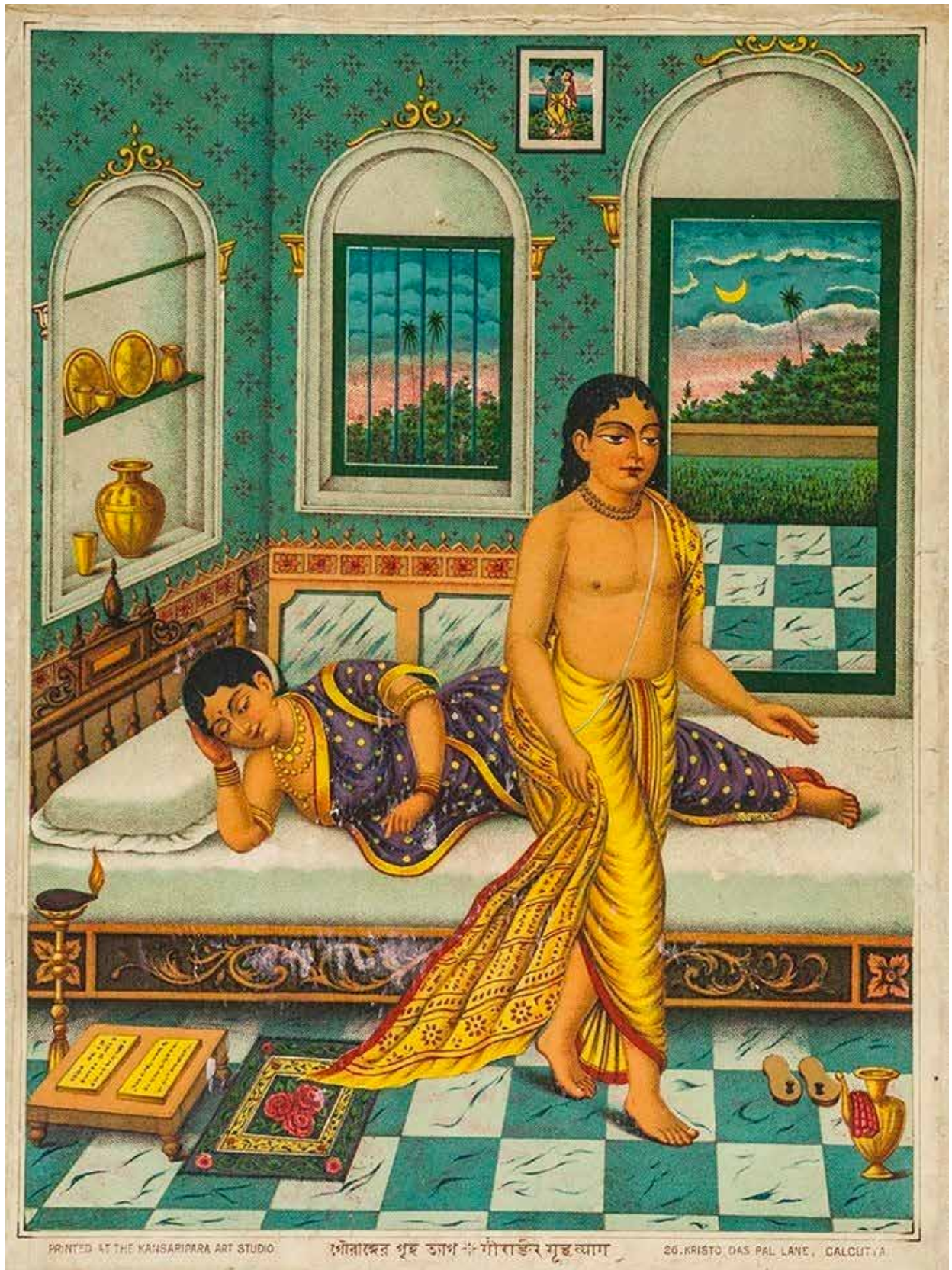
Devotee 1: For instance, previously many people took *sannyāsa* mainly because they were frustrated with family life. They weren't necessarily willing to serve Krishna.

Gour Govinda Swami: That is all cheating. That is not *sannyāsa*.

Devotee 1: Can they make any advancement in that ashram?

Gour Govinda Swami: What has Prabhupada said? If you are not completely free from sex desire, don't take *sannyāsa*. What is this? It is only a farce.

In your family life, if you find it difficult to render pleasing service to Krishna, then it is better to leave. If it is favorable, why should you leave? If the wife is devoted and all of the children are devoted, then why should you leave? If you find it not to be favorable, if you tried your best but you failed, then better to leave.



Gaurāṅgera gr̥ha tyāga — Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu leaving home to take sannyāsa

Vintage Bengali painting by an unknown artist



The devotees in Katwa lament when the barber was going to shave Mahaprabhu's hair before his taking sannyāsa

Ramanuja Acharya did that. He played a trick on his wife and left. He tried his best. It is your duty; you should try your best to bring your wife on this path. But if you tried your best but failed, then make some trick and leave.

Devotee 2: What if a *sannyāsī* is not Krishna conscious?

Gour Govinda Swami: Then they will fall down. They cannot keep up *sannyāsa* if they are not Krishna conscious. No. This is not a joke. It is very serious. It is the highest, topmost ashram. Is it child's play? Today you play with this thing and then, throwing it away, you take another toy and play with it? Is it child's play to carry a *tri-daṇḍa*? Today you hold the *daṇḍa* and tomorrow you throw it and catch another woman? What is this nonsense? 🍌

— From a darshan in New Mayapur, France. 29 July 1991.

THE PURPOSE OF GAUDIYA VAISHNAVA SANNYASA



Five thousand years ago, at the end of *Dvāpara-yuga*, Krishna spoke *Bhagavad-gītā* for the upliftment of all mankind. In the last chapter of the *Gītā* (18.66

and 18.34), Krishna gave his most confidential instructions: *sarva-dharman parityajya* and *man-manā bhava mad-bhaktah* — one should surrender to Krishna and become his devotee. Yet, seeing the fallen condition of the people of *Kali-yuga*, Krishna thought that they were not capable of understanding the *Gītā*. Theoretical instructions were not enough; they would need a practical example. Therefore, to personally show how to follow the *Gītā*'s instruction to surrender, Krishna decided to conceal his divine powers and reappear in the guise of his own devotee.

That incarnation is Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, famous as *parama-karuṇa*, the most merciful incarnation, because he is *kṛṣṇa-prema-pradātā*, the giver of ecstatic love for Krishna. But the Lord found that because he had come in disguise, some of the sinful living entities, not understanding his divine nature, were unwilling to accept his teachings. Some even criticized and offended him. Consequently, he was unable to give them the love of God that he had come to distribute. Thus, since the people of that time had great respect for *sannyāsīs* in the line of Sripad Shankaracharya, to deliver the fallen souls of this age the supremely merciful Lord accepted the order of *sannyāsa*. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes in his purport to Cc. ādi 3.3.4:



In Jagannath Puri when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu heard a lady singing the Gītā-govinda he ran to embrace her. At that time his servant Govinda ran after him and stopped him.

During the time of Lord Chaitanya, the influence of Shankaracharya in society was very strong. People thought that one could accept *sannyāsa* only in the disciplic succession of Shankaracharya. Lord Chaitanya could have performed his missionary activities as a householder, but he found householder life an obstruction to his mission. Therefore, he decided to accept the renounced order, *sannyāsa*. Since his acceptance of *sannyāsa* was also designed to attract public attention, Lord Chaitanya, not wishing to disturb the social convention, took the renounced order of life from a *sannyāsī* in the disciplic succession of Shankaracharya.

But in the early twentieth century, the intellectuals of India were largely enamored of Western ideas. The Brahmo Samaj and other groups had

experimented with combining Western concepts with Indian tradition and achieved some success. The Ramakrishna Mission, started in 1897, became very popular in Bengal using a system of monasteries and temples serving as bases for *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* to study and preach. For the common pious people of the time, it was not important that the *sannyāsīs* of the Ramakrishna mission were wearing shoes, driving in cars, and so on. Just by seeing the *sannyāsa* garb, the people respected those *sannyāsīs* as *sādhus*.

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinoda was the first prominent Gaudiya Vaishnava *ācārya* to present the teachings of Mahaprabhu in a modern context. His desire was to

spread Mahaprabhu's movement all over the world in a dynamic way. Under his direction, his fourth son, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, also began preaching. Following in the mood of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who accepted *sannyāsa* so that the mass of people would accept his teachings, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur also introduced *sannyāsa* and founded a formal institution of temples and preachers. In March of 1918, on the day of Gaura Purnima, at the age of 44, he took *sannyāsa* from a picture of Srila Gaurakishore Das Babaji. Although certain persons sometimes criticize this act, considering it to be against scriptural injunctions and not authorized by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, its sole purpose was to induce the conditioned souls to follow the instructions of Mahaprabhu and thus be delivered. Thus, Srila Saraswati Thakur accepted it and encouraged some leading disciples to accept *sannyāsa* as well. 🍌 — MDas.

CLOSING THOUGHTS
BHAKTI AND
SANNYASA



In honor of the upcoming observances of the anniversaries of the taking of *sannyāsa* by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's older brother

SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

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श्रीकृष्णकथामृत बिन्दु



Unknown artist. Early 19th century. Maiyanatha temple in Amritsar.

Temple wall mural of Radha Krishna on a swing

Visvarup, and by Srila Prabhupada in 1959, this issue of Bindu has focused on *Gauḍiṃya sannyāsa*, or renunciation inspired by ecstatic devotion. It has explored the purposes of *bhakti-sannyāsa* and the vast differences between it and *karma-sannyāsa*. The renunciation of Gaudiya Vaishnavas is inspired by the renunciation of the *gopīs* of Vraja. Their renunciation was not done to purify their existence, nor was it inspired by a desire for liberation. The renunciation of the *gopīs* was not something they contemplated and decided to do. It was spontaneous, irresistible, and unstoppable — like the eruption of a volcano. The motivation for *sannyāsa* of Gaudiya Vaishnava *sādhus* who follow the *gopīs* is simply, wholly, and solely motivated by the desire to please guru and Krishna. Therefore, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur calls Gaudiya *sannyāsīs* the “living *mṛdaṅgas* of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.” In this issue we have endeavored to examine *sannyāsa* through the heart lens of our previous *ācāryas* via the doorway of various questions such as, “What is the definition of *sannyāsa*?” “Is it allowed in this age?” “Why did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta introduce it?” “Is it required for everyone to do, and why did Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada grant *sannyāsa* to relatively new devotees?”

As always, we will consider our endeavor to be a success if this issue of Bindu brings some inspiration to the beloved followers of the son of mother Sachi. 🍌

Vaiṣṇava-kṛpā-prārthī,

Madhavananda Das, editor